

Frequently Asked Questions from Vendors

1. Why is my company required to pay a 1.75% fee?

The State of North Carolina has changed the way that we conduct business in order to take advantage of process efficiencies by conducting business electronically. By participating in E-Procurement, you will be able to market your ongoing business with these entities, and also benefit from the process and time savings that are possible with E-Procurement. The transaction fee is currently for goods, not services. The fee offsets the expenses of the development, maintenance and ongoing operations of NC E-Procurement @ Your Service.

2. Does the 1.75% fee make my taxes go up?

The E-Procurement transaction fee will not increase your taxes. E-Procurement is a self-funded project and no tax revenues were used to fund the development of the system, or for its ongoing application support.

3. If I register in VendorLink, am I automatically registered in E-Procurement?

VendorLink and E-Procurement are two separate registration processes with the State of North Carolina. VendorLink registration enables you to receive electronic notification of any sealed formal bidding opportunities for goods and services that are posted on the State's Interactive Purchasing System (IPS). When you register in E-Procurement, you are enabled to receive purchase orders online. You must register in both systems to take full advantage of business opportunities with the State of North Carolina.

4. How do I know if my company is registered in E-Procurement?

You may conduct a vendor search by navigating to <http://www.ep.ncgov.com>. Select Vendor, and then Search for Registered Vendors. Follow the self-help instruction to determine if you are registered. Or you may contact the E-Procurement Help Desk at 888-211-7440, and select the vendor option.

5. How are construction items handled in paying the E-Procurement fee?

Labor (or services) on construction and renovation projects is not subject to the E-Procurement fee. Items that are considered commodities or furnishings to complete construction projects are subject to the

E-Procurement fee (e.g., carpet, office panel systems, food service equipment, and furniture). Commodity items should be separated out from the actual construction labor on the purchase order and invoice.

6. How does my company benefit by using E-Procurement?

Supplier benefits include increased access to North Carolina government markets. By registering with E-Procurement, suppliers have a single point of access to government entities, public schools, and community colleges. E-Procurement provides a faster and more efficient method of quoting through the use of eQuote, as well as increased order accuracy and consistency through the delivery of electronic purchase orders. There is also potential for supplier cost savings in the areas of processing, marketing, and administrative costs.

7. What happens if I neglect to sign my bid?

Failure to sign a bid will subject your bid to rejection, and therefore be considered invalid.

8. What if I do not agree with the NC General Terms and Conditions?

All bids are subject to the provisions of the State of North Carolina's General Contract Terms and Conditions. Bidders are instructed not to attach any additional terms and conditions in their response. The State objects to and will not evaluate or consider any additional terms and conditions submitted with a bidder's response. This applies to any language appearing in or attached to the document as part of the bidder's response. By execution and delivery of the document, the bidder agrees that any additional terms and conditions, whether submitted purposely or inadvertently, shall have no force or effect.

9. Am I required to accept the Terms of Use when I register in E-Procurement?

You must accept the Terms of Use when registering your company in E-Procurement. If you do not accept the Terms of Use, your E-Procurement registration is incomplete. Users of the E-Procurement system will not have the capability to send electronic purchase orders or eQuotes through E-Procurement to your company if you are not registered.

10. How and when can I protest a bid award?

When a bidder chooses to protest a contract awarded by the Secretary of Administration, or by an agency (excluding universities) over \$25,000

resulting from a solicitation, the bidder must submit a written request to the State Purchasing Officer with the Division of Purchase and Contract. This request must be received in the Division of Purchase and Contract within thirty (30) consecutive calendar days from the date of the contract award.

When a bidder chooses to protest a contract awarded by an agency or university resulting from a solicitation (that is over \$10,000 but less than \$25,000 for any agency, or any contract awarded by a university), the bidder must submit a written request to the issuing procurement officer at the address of the issuing agency. This request must be received in that office within thirty (30) consecutive calendar days from the date of the contract award.

All protest letters must contain specific reasons and any supporting documentation for the protest.

Note: Refer to the solicitation document in question for more specifics.

11. What equipment is needed to conduct business through E-Procurement?

You will need access to a computer with Internet access to register and if you elect to receive purchase orders via email. You will also need a fax machine, if you elect to receive purchase orders via Fax.

12. How do I get my products on the State's Qualified Products List (QPL)?

The Engineering section within the Division of Purchase & Contract handles the QPL evaluation process. The process usually begins 6 to 8 months before a new statewide term contract is advertised for competitive bidding. A typical statewide term contract covers a one or two- year period with possible renewal options. The prequalification process includes submittal of information and possible samples to determine compliance with the specifications for the commodity being evaluated. This process may also include the evaluation of information and samples by an independent agency-user advisory committee.

The QPL evaluation precedes the expiration of a current contract if there is already one in place. Web links may be provided to the specifications, QPL, and existing contract. The web link information may also reference any third party laboratory test data or other certifications that might be needed for compliance with the specifications. Vendors should track the expiration date on any existing term contract. Vendors also need to make sure their company is registered in VendorLink to receive updates for the commodities of interest.

13. Who do I notify when I need a Quality Acceptance Inspection?

Not all purchases require a Quality Acceptance Inspection. If required, you may request a Quality Acceptance Inspection after delivery and installation of a product, by notifying the E-Procurement/Education Outreach section within the Division of Purchase and Contract. You can contact the inspection coordinator directly at 919-807-4551 or you can send an email to myra.welsh@ncmail.net.

14. What is the difference between Vendor Link and eQuote within E-Procurement?

VendorLink is the website where a company may register to receive electronic notifications of bidding opportunities for goods and services that are posted on the State's Interactive Purchasing System (IPS). Solicitation documents are posted on IPS for public view on the Internet, and VendorLink is the registered vendor file that is linked to IPS by commodity code.

eQuote is an informal quoting tool within the E-Procurement system that requires a separate registration process from VendorLink and E-Procurement. eQuote is a tool used by the buyer to search for and invite registered vendors to quote on goods and services when the dollar value is below the benchmark required for advertisement of bids on IPS.

15. Who is responsible for updating my vendor registration information?

The vendors are responsible for updating their company information in VendorLink and E-Procurement. Vendors are encouraged to remember their user IDs and passwords so they can view and update information periodically. For E-Procurement registration assistance, contact the NC E-Procurement Help Desk for assistance at 888-211-7440, and select the vendor option. For VendorLink registration assistance, contact the NC VendorLink Help Desk at 919-807-4502.

16. How do I update my registration information in VendorLink and E-Procurement?

To update your company information in VendorLink, navigate to <http://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/vendor/vndrlogon.asp>. Enter your user ID and password when prompted and update your company information as needed.

To update your company information in E-Procurement, navigate to <https://vendor.ncgov.com>. Enter your user ID and password when prompted and update your company information as needed.

17. How do I get on State term contracts?

A statewide term contract is normally awarded for a one or two-year period and may have renewal options or contract extensions. Term contracts are normally established through a competitive bid process. To be considered for getting on a term contract requires you to respond to the solicitation and submit a bid that is both in compliance with the bid specifications and competitive in price. Under normal conditions you cannot be added to a term contract in the middle of the contract period. To receive notification of any bidding opportunities complete registration in VendorLink.

18. When can I review the bids and/or proposals?

Bids and proposals submitted in response to a solicitation do not become public information until after an award of the contract. After award, the entire bid file shall become a matter of public record with the exception of those articles marked and considered to be confidential according to North Carolina law.

19. What is a HUB vendor and what are the qualifications?

Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) consist of minority, women and disabled business firms that are at least fifty-one percent owned and operated by an individual(s) of the aforementioned categories. Also included in this category are disabled business enterprises and non-profit work centers for the blind and severely disabled.

20. Who do I call if I need help with E-procurement?

For E-Procurement assistance contact the E-Procurement Help Desk at 888-211-7440, and select option 2 for vendors.

21. Who do I call if I need help with VendorLink?

For VendorLink assistance contact the NC Division of Purchase and Contract at 1-919-807-4502.

22. Prior to responding to bids or proposals, can I find out what the State paid on a previous contract and to whom it was awarded?

Contract pricing is part of the public record. Any and all interested parties may contact the state agency, community college, or university regarding a contract award and pricing information for any previous contract prior to responding to bids and proposals.

23. What does it mean to be debarred?

If a contractor is found to be in default of a contract by failing to perform in accordance with the contract requirements, the Division of Purchase and Contract may debar the contractor from doing business with the State or agency for a period of time at the discretion of the Division. This does not limit any other remedies that may be available to the State or agency.